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SECRET SECURITY INFORMATION

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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

767.00/7-3053

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FROM

American Embassy, Rome

DESP. NO.

TO

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

July 30, 1953

REF

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

EUR INDEX

REVIEWED BY *g. b. h. w. t. h.* DATE *3/1/54*CLASSIFIED BY *g. b. h. w. t. h.* DATE *3/1/54*RDS FOR KOS. EXT. DATE *3/1/54*

AUG 8

BELGRADE ATHENS ANKARA

ITALIAN FOREIGN OFFICE VIEWS ON ALBANIA

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Commenting on the recent governmental changes in Albania, a Foreign Office official at the working level has expressed the view that the reorganization of the Albanian Government and changes in the responsibilities of certain top officials may be interpreted as moves in correspondence with the party-government reshuffling which has taken place in the Soviet Union since Stalin's death. On the basis of recent information from the Italian mission in Tirana, it is the view of the Italian Government that the recent changes appear to reflect a drop in status for Mehmet Shehu who has been considered a formidable competitor of Prime Minister Enver Hodja for the top power position in Albania. The Italians feel, therefore, that Shehu's loss of this party position is much more significant than Hodja's surrender of the portfolios of Defense and Foreign Affairs. They tend to view Shehu's loss of status, like Beriya's fall in the Soviet Union, as an index of the power of collective party leadership, headed at the present time by Hodja, over the police forces, headed by Shehu. As to other changes, the source commented only on the dismissal of Omer Nishani, former chairman of the Presidium of the National Assembly, which he said came about because he was not "sufficiently leftist".

The source stated that these changes in the Albania hierarchy do not reflect any diminution of Soviet control over Albanian affairs which, he said, remains as tight today as ever. He indicated that there had been no reports of intensified resistance in Albania; although the population as a whole continues to oppose the repressive communist regime, their opposition is passive for the most part and there is no evidence that their dissatisfaction is taking the form of open, organized revolt. He added that the Italian Government's information from its mission in Athens is that the flow of escapees from Albania into Greece has in recent weeks diminished considerably.

Turning to the recent declaration on Albanian independence by the Balkan pact powers in Athens, he expressed the displeasure of the Italian Government partly because the statement made no reference to Albania's territorial integrity but principally because the Balkan powers had by inference adopted the Albanian problem as their own. In the Italian view, Albania is not fundamentally a Balkan problem but rather, one of broad international concern. In substance, the Italians still hold to the position expounded in Washington last April--that any declaration on Albania should have NATO sponsorship.

MToon, lit 4/1953

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REPORTER

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For the Ambassador
Edward L. Freers
Edward L. Freers
First Secretary of Embassy

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